United Nations A/C.1/60/PV.23

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Official Records

First Committee
23rd meeting
Tuesday, 1 November 2005, 9.30 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Choi Young-jin ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 9.35 a.m.

Agenda items 85 to 105 (*continued*)

Action on all draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items

The Chairman: The Committee will take action on the remaining two draft resolutions listed in informal paper 6: A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1 and A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1. The floor is now open for general statements on cluster 6, "Other disarmament measures and international security".

Mr. Mine (Japan): I would like to clarify Japan's position regarding the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1, entitled "Transparency in armaments", of which it is a sponsor. Japan became a sponsor of the draft because transparency in armaments is Japan's priority. However, Japan would like to express deep regret about the fact that the programme budget implications document relevant to the draft was circulated just a day before the voting.

Although the budgetary implications of the draft were already clear at the registration of its first version, we cannot consider separately the two documents, which are complementary. The information contained in the programme budget implications document is highly important to member States as they decide their position vis-à-vis the draft resolution on transparency. Japan would like to strongly request the Secretariat to circulate such documents well in advance.

Japan can never accept an uncontrolled increase in the United Nations budget. We understand that the amount in the programme budget implications document indicates the maximum estimate. Therefore, the Secretariat should have continued to deal with the possible increase by making the best use of existing resources. Efforts for the effective exploitation of resources should never be neglected and the amount saved thereby should be handled with due procedure.

To prevent unexpected programme budget implications in the future, Japan believes it desirable to hold negotiations between member States and the Department for Disarmament Affairs in order to consider a system that would enable the Department to provide advice on upcoming periodical meetings. Japan strongly demands that the programme budget implications for the draft resolution before us be covered by scrapping the existing activities or by saving the expenditures.

The Chairman: The Committee will proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1.

Recorded votes on separate operative paragraphs have been requested.

I call on the Secretary of the Committee to conduct the voting.

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): The Committee will now proceed to vote on draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1, entitled "Transparency in armaments". The sponsors of the draft resolution are

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listed in documents A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1, A/C.1/60/INF/2 and A/C.1/60/INF/2/Add.1.

I should like to draw the Committee's attention to the programme budget implications of the draft resolution, which are contained in document A/C.1/60/L.61. An additional sponsor to the draft resolution is Grenada.

The Committee will now proceed to take a separate vote on the last words of operative paragraph 2, which read as follows: "and the recommendations contained in paragraphs 112 to 114 of the 2003 report of the Secretary-General".

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen

Against:

United States of America

Abstaining:

Algeria, Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates

The last words of operative paragraph 2 were retained by 108 votes to 1, with 16 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Colombia, Uganda and Zambia informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour; the delegation of the Sudan informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): The Committee will now take a separate vote on operative paragraph 3, which reads as follows:

"Invites Member States in a position to do so, pending further development of the Register, to provide additional information on procurement from national production and military holdings and to make use of the 'Remarks' column in the standardized reporting form to provide additional information such as types or models and to include transfers of small arms and light weapons, using definitions and reporting measures they deem appropriate, as part of their additional background information".

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao

People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Algeria, Bahrain, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates

Operative paragraph 3 was retained by 115 votes to none, with 18 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Uganda and Zambia informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour; the delegations of the Sudan and Yemen informed the Secretariat that they had intended to abstain.]

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): The Committee will now proceed to vote on operative paragraph 4 (b), which reads as follows:

"Requests the Secretary-General, with assistance of a group of governmental experts to be convened in 2006, within available resources, on the basis of equitable geographical representation, to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, taking into account the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and the reports of the Secretary-General on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, with a view to taking a decision at its sixty-first session;".

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Yemen

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates

Operative paragraph 4 (b) was retained by 118 votes to none, with 16 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Pakistan, Uganda and Zambia informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour; the delegations of the Sudan and Yemen informed the Secretariat that they had intended to abstain.]

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): The Committee will now vote on operative paragraph 6, which reads as follows:

"Invites the Conference on Disarmament to consider continuing its work undertaken in the field of transparency in armaments;".

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Algeria, Bahrain, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mexico, Morocco, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

Operative paragraph 6 was retained by 116 votes to none, with 19 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Uganda and Zambia informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour; the delegation of the Sudan informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): The Committee will now take action on draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1 as a whole.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey,

Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Algeria, Bahrain, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

Draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1 was adopted by 122 votes to none, with 21 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Mali, Uganda and Zambia informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour; the delegation of the Sudan informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The Chairman: I now call on those representatives who wish to explain their votes on the draft resolution just adopted.

Ms. Sanders (United States of America): The United States has consistently supported the series of resolutions of which A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1 is the most recent. The United States strongly supports the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and urges all United Nations Member States to contribute to it.

However, as members know, we are now faced with a draft resolution that would involve spending more than $1 million not currently funded in the Department for Disarmament Affairs' draft 2006-2007 budget. The draft resolution highlights the need to consider carefully both the financial and the substantive implications of convening groups of governmental experts on any issue. The convening of such groups is threatening to become a substantial and unnecessary drain on the Department's budget. A group of governmental experts should be convened only in response to First Committee draft resolutions that enjoy widespread and overwhelming support. They should not be the pet projects of individual member States.

Moreover, there has been a disturbing trend recently, after a group of governmental experts concludes without issuing a substantive report, for the sponsors of the resolution that created the group to immediately call for a new such group. That is wrong and wasteful. The Department should require a cooling-off period for the solicitation and distribution of the views of Member States before a new group of governmental experts on the same subject can be convened. If the views of the Member States on the subject have not changed, the next group will likely suffer the same fate as the previous one.

In an era of limited budgets and competing priorities, that is a substantial and unnecessary waste of funds, and the United States will oppose convening and funding such groups of governmental experts. We are employing that approach in considering today's draft resolution and others in the First Committee. While we have voted in favour of the draft resolution, we hope that Fifth Committee delegations will join us in ensuring that it does not cause an increase in the overall budget of the United Nations.

Mr. Shamaa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The States members of the League of Arab States wish once again to set out their position on transparency in armaments, in particular with respect to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

The members of the Arab League have made their position known with respect to transparency in armaments for several years now, stressing their commitment to the Register. That position is firm, clear and based on a general orientation in favour of international disarmament, which is based in turn on the specific situation in the Middle East. The States of the Arab League support transparency in armaments in order to strengthen international peace and security and believe that, if transparency mechanisms are to succeed, they must be based on balanced, transparent and non-discriminatory fundamental principles that strengthen peace for all States at the national, regional and international levels and in conformity with international law.

The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms represents the international community's first, albeit a belated attempt, to address the issue of transparency at the international level. While its value as an international instrument for enhancing early warning and confidence is beyond doubt, it does suffer from several problems. The most serious is the fact that more than half of the States of the United Nations

refuse to provide it with the necessary information. The States of the Arab League also believe it essential to broaden the Register's scope, and recent experience has persuaded a number of us that the Register, which addresses only seven types of conventional weapons, is inadequate to our security needs, given its present limited coverage. The Register's future will therefore depend on the international community's resolve to further enforce transparency and to build confidence.

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/36 L of 6 December 1991, whereby the Register was established, we believe that the Register's scope should be broadened to encompass all information related to sophisticated conventional weaponry and weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and advanced technology that could give the Register a more comprehensive, balanced and non-discriminatory nature, thus allowing for increased systematic involvement in its activities.

The Middle East region, where the lack of qualitative equilibrium in armaments is obvious, represents a special case in that regard. We cannot guarantee transparency and confidence unless we take a comprehensive and balanced approach. The status of transparency in the seven categories of conventional weapons, including sophisticated weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons, is neither comprehensive nor balanced and will not lead to the desire results, particularly given the current situation in the Middle East.

Israel is still occupying Arab lands, possesses the most destructive types of weapons of mass destruction and is the only State of the region that is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It persists in disregarding the international community's numerous calls to accede to the NPT and to submit its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. That situation led the States parties to the NPT to insist, at their recent 2000 Review Conference, on the need for Israel to take those steps.

The States members of the Arab League express their deep regret at the failure of the former group of governmental experts to implement the provisions of resolution 46/36 L, which established the Register, and to extend the Register's coverage to national military warehouses or to weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons in particular. Evidence of that failure is the fact that, in its current form, the Register does not effectively serve the purposes for which it was created — to strengthen confidence and provide early warning.

In light of all this, the States members of the Arab League express their reservations about the draft resolution's methodologies and the proposal to create a group of governmental experts. If the Register is to be an effective and reliable confidence-building and early-warning instrument, our concerns and those of the States of the Middle East must be addressed with respect to universal involvement in the Register.

Mr. Hu Xiaodi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China abstained in the voting on the draft resolution entitled "Transparency in armaments", contained in document A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1, as a whole. I take this opportunity to reiterate China's position in that regard.

China has always looked favourably on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. China began submitting its reports to the Register when it was established in 1993. However, since 1996 a certain country has registered, in the form of a footnote, its arms sales to the Chinese province of Taiwan. Such behaviour not only constitutes interference in China's internal affairs, but also violates the important principle that the Register should record only arms transactions between sovereign States, thus damaging the Register's authority.

That is unacceptable to China, which has thus been compelled to suspend its reporting to the Register since 1998. The improper practice of the said country is the only obstacle to China's submission of reports to the Register and the principle reason for its inability to support the draft resolution. We call once again on that country to rectify its mistakes forthwith and to create the necessary conditions for China to resume its participation in the Register. China has actively and constructively participated in all United Nations groups of governmental experts on the Register and has made contributions thereto. We hope to pursue such efforts.

We note that, with respect to previous resolutions on transparency in armaments, new elements have been included in this year's draft resolution. We believe that the registration of small arms and light weapons should be subject to study and discussion by next year's group of governmental experts, and that this year's draft resolution should not prejudge that group's work. We

therefore wish to place on record our reservations in that regard.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba again abstained in the voting on the draft resolution, contained this year in document A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1, which includes several controversial elements with respect to which my delegation has reservations.

The first regards operative paragraphs 2 and 3 and the references therein to recommendations contained in the 2003 report of the Secretary-General. It will be recalled that, at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Cuba abstained in the voting on the corresponding text, which was adopted as resolution 58/54. I should specify that, despite that, my country has participated over the past two years in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, pursuant to the appeal to Member States contained in the resolution in question.

Our second reservation pertains to operative paragraph 6, in the separate voting on which we abstained, as we have done in the past, because we feel that the Conference on Disarmament has already carried out and completed its work on transparency. The decision as to whether or not to resume consideration of the issue in the Conference on Disarmament is entirely a prerogative of that forum. Cuba therefore reserves the right to take a definitive position on this issue at the Conference, bearing in mind the need for that body to adopt a balanced programme of work that takes into due consideration the disarmament priorities established by the General Assembly.

My country believes that transparency in armaments is an important factor in creating a climate of trust and in easing tensions among States. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a concrete means to contribute to that goal. We reiterate that the Register must be balanced, comprehensive and non-discriminatory. It should promote the national, regional and international security of all Member States, in conformity with international law.

I would also recall that every State has the legitimate right to self-defence, as enshrined in the Organization's Charter, and thus to procure weapons to ensure its safety, including from external sources. The Register is a confidence-building measure that complements others that apply at the national, regional and global levels.

The inclusion in the Register of information related to sophisticated conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, and the transfer of equipment and technology directly linked to the development and production of such weapons — whose power to destroy and destabilize is far greater than that of conventional weapons — would transform it into a more balanced and comprehensive instrument and would promote its universalization.

Finally, I would like to express Cuba's interest in participating in the group of governmental experts to be convened in 2006 in accordance with paragraph 4 (b) of the draft resolution.

Mr. Atieh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to express its full support for the position of the countries members of the League of Arab States with regard to draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1, on transparency in armaments, as set out earlier by the representative of Egypt.

We fully support the goal of creating a world free from the threat or use of force — a world where the principles of peace, equality and justice prevail. We are ready to participate in any sincere international effort to achieve that goal. I would, however, like to draw the attention of the First Committee to the fact that the draft resolution entitled "Transparency in armaments" does not take into consideration the special situation of the Middle East, where the Arab-Israeli conflict is still raging as a result of Israel's continued occupation of Arab territories and its refusal to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Israel possesses and has the ability to manufacture the most sophisticated types of weapons, including nuclear weapons, and it is acquiring other sophisticated and deadly weaponry as well. Thus, the transparency that Israel claims in the field of armaments applies to only a small portion of its sophisticated and lethal arsenal.

Mr. Almaabri (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation would like to express its support for the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express our full support for the Arab position on draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.50/Rev.1, "Transparency in

armaments", as set out by several Arab delegations, in particular the sisterly Republic of Egypt. The draft resolution does not take fully into account the sensitivity of the situation in the Middle East with regard to complete disarmament and transparency in armaments.

The Chairman: The Committee will now move on to cluster 7, "Disarmament machinery", which contains one draft resolution, A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1.

I shall now give the floor to those representatives wishing to make statements in explanation of position on the draft resolution.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): The United States would like to note for the record that it will not participate in the action to be taken on draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1, entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission".

The Chairman: The Committee will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1. I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee.

Ms. Stoute (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1 is entitled "Report of the Disarmament Commission". The draft resolution was introduced by the representative of Sierra Leone at the Committee's 22nd meeting, on 31 October 2005. The sponsors of the draft resolution are listed in document A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1.

The Chairman: The sponsors of the draft resolution have expressed the wish that the draft resolution be adopted by the Committee without a vote. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to act accordingly.

Draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1 was adopted.

The Chairman: The floor is open to delegations for explanations of position on the draft resolution we have just adopted.

Ms. Soni (Canada): We are all well aware of the current disappointing state of the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery. Indeed, many of us lamented this during our general and thematic debates earlier this session. The inability of the Disarmament Commission to agree on a substantive programme of work during its 2005 session figures in that disappointment.

Let us not forget the role and the purpose of the Disarmament Commission. It is a deliberative body, mandated to consider various problems in the disarmament and non-proliferation field and to make recommendations thereupon to the General Assembly. We recall that it has done good work in the past: the 16 principles of verification, the principles and guidelines for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and work on practical disarmament measures in post-conflict situations, to name but a few of its achievements.

The time for deliberative work on contemporary issues is long overdue. It is most unfortunate, however, that some States seem unwilling to see those issues even deliberated. Given that the Disarmament Commission is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, the First Committee had an opportunity to fix the problem of the Commission during our consultations on draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1 by asking the Disarmament Commission to consider specific issues during its 2006 substantive session. However, we failed to seize that opportunity to rectify the difficulties, rather than postponing their consideration.

It is not too late to salvage prospects for a productive Disarmament Commission session. The draft resolution before us today recommends that Member States intensify consultations, building on the significant progress achieved during the 2005 organizational session. Canada calls on all Member States to seize this remaining opportunity by working together in a spirit of flexibility and compromise to find agreement on the agenda package that was before the 2005 session and thus ensure a Disarmament Commission session next April that actually starts addressing substance rather than process.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): With respect to draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1, which was just adopted without a vote, my delegation wishes to make the following statement.

It is highly regrettable that, again this year, the Disarmament Commission was not able to begin its consideration of substantive issues. The delegation of Cuba actively participated in the process of unofficial consultations and in the organizational meeting held in July in order to try to reach consensus on the agenda items for the substantive session.

In that context, we actively support the constructive proposals for items opportunely presented by the Non-Aligned Movement, consistent with General Assembly decision 52/492. Unfortunately, specific items could not be included in paragraph 5 of draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1. As delegations will recall, at the organizational meeting, representatives reached an *ad referendum* agreement that was later objected to by a single delegation. Cuba believes that we must preserve the Disarmament Commission, because it is the specialized deliberative body within the multilateral disarmament machinery of the United Nations.

In our opinion, no change to the First Committee's working methods can overcome the reality that certain States clearly lack the political will to advance the multilateral focus of disarmament, in particular on the question of nuclear disarmament.

Like other non-aligned countries, Cuba will continue to contribute actively and constructively to efforts aimed at achieving consensus on items that should be included on the agenda of the 2006 substantive session of the Disarmament Commission.

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico fully associates itself with the content of the statement made by the delegation of Canada and with the comments just made by the representative of Cuba.

Mexico believes that it is fundamental that the Disarmament Commission be able to initiate its substantive work at its upcoming session. We support the compromise submitted by Ambassador Rowe, whom we commend for his tireless efforts to find a compromise formula.

At the same time, we express our doubts. We accept that compromise only to the extent that the proposed text speaks of final agreements that must be achieved before the beginning of the substantive session.

In that context, we underline the frustration felt at the Committee's failure to duly instruct the Disarmament Commission on what it should do, as well as our determination to see the Commission adopt a decision on the first day of its session. We do not believe that it would be healthy, during the substantive session, to reopen those issues, in particular the *ad referendum* agreement reached this year. Mexico is of the view that the agreement should be adopted on the first day of the session, by a vote if necessary.

Mr. Shamaa (Egypt): I would like to explain our position with regard to draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.59/Rev.1, on the report of the Disarmament Commission.

We have to indicate clearly that we very much lament that the agreement reached — albeit *ad referendum* — during the 2005 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission was not preserved or finalized. That makes us more determined to work towards honouring previous commitments and obligations, which we view as the only way to preserve our collective efforts in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation. We fully share the views expressed by the representatives of Mexico, Cuba and Canada in that regard.

The Chairman: The Committee has thus concluded its work on all draft resolutions submitted under disarmament measures and international security agenda items.

General debate, consideration of and action on the draft resolution submitted under agenda item 88 (Question of Antarctica)

The Chairman: I would like to inform the Committee that, as a result of consultations among groups and delegations, a draft resolution has been formulated as a Chairman's proposal. It is contained in document A/C.1/60/L.60. The draft resolution is largely an updating of General Assembly resolution 57/51 of 22 November 2002. Inter alia, it welcomes the continuing cooperation among countries undertaking scientific research activities in Antarctica, the increasing awareness of and interest in Antarctica shown by the international community and the establishment of the secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty, which became operational as of 1 September 2004.

Further, the draft resolution reaffirms the conviction that, in the interest of all mankind, Antarctica should continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and that it should not become the scene or object of international discord.

It welcomes the invitations extended to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to attend Consultative Meetings of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties in order to assist

in their substantive work, and urges the Parties to continue to do so for future Consultative Meetings. It also welcomes the practice by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties of regularly providing information pertaining to those meetings and other relevant information on Antarctica.

Before we proceed to take a decision on the draft resolution, I call on delegations wishing to make general statements on this item.

Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report submitted under this agenda item, contained in document A/60/222. The report provides a useful account and details concerning activities and developments in relation to Antarctica undertaken by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, the Antarctic Treaty system and various international parties since this item was last discussed by the General Assembly, at its fifty-seventh session, in 2002.

We are certainly gratified that there continues to be greater transparency and accountability on the part of the Consultative Parties concerning their meetings, activities and developments in relation to Antarctica. My delegation commends them for the cooperation they have continued to extend to the rest of the international community in sharing information in that regard, as the General Assembly called for in its resolution 57/51. That sharing of information has revealed the profound interdependence and link between Antarctica and the rest of the world, in particular its critical role in the global environment system. We call on all countries, organizations and individuals concerned to continue their valuable work in that regard. We appeal to all concerned to see to it that arrangements to ensure that the benefits resulting from that work will be shared with all countries and peoples of the world.

My delegation continues to recognize the particular significance of Antarctica and of the conservation of its pristine environment, in the common interest of all humankind, for peace and security. We are satisfied that there is now a greater degree of interest and awareness among the international community on the subject since this item was placed on the agenda of the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session, in 1983.

We are particularly satisfied that the international community has recognized the global importance of this last frontier due to its intrinsic link and interaction with the world's oceans and atmosphere affecting the entire global environmental system.

The well-being of Antarctica relates indirectly to the well-being of the planet and of humanity. Given the increasingly pernicious global impact of climate change, as evidenced, inter alia, by the frequency of natural disasters, it is pertinent for all of us to collectively endeavour to ensure that the Antarctic environment is protected and preserved forever.

My delegation would like to stress once again that, in the interest of all mankind, Antarctica should continue forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and that it should not become the scene or object of international discord.

We remain firm in our conviction that the management and the use of Antarctica should be conducted in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and of promoting international cooperation for the benefit of mankind as a whole.

We maintain that the United Nations, as the representative global body with a network of specialized agencies, is the most appropriate authority to monitor, administer and regulate the various scientific and non-scientific activities in Antarctica. That notwithstanding, we welcome the considerable broadening of cooperation in various areas among the Antarctic Treaty system, related mechanisms and the specialized agencies of the United Nations, as described in the report of the Secretary-General. We would like to commend the United Nations Environment Programme, which has an indispensable role to play, for its ongoing work to ensure the environmental sustainability of Antarctica through its conservation, management and monitoring programmes.

The entry into force on 14 January 1998 of the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty has partially regulated human activities in Antarctica, further protecting and preserving the environment and its associated ecosystem. Although the Protocol has no enforcement mechanism of its own and needs to be further strengthened, it is considered an important milestone in the efforts to protect and preserve the pristine

environment of the continent. My delegation reaffirms that the Protocol's 50-year moratorium, beginning in 1992, on prospecting and mining in Antarctica should constitute the first important step towards a permanent ban on mining on the continent. My delegation is concerned that not all parties have met their reporting requirements pursuant to article 17 of the Protocol, and we therefore urge those parties to do so without delay. We hope that this provision will be met in full in the future.

Nevertheless, my delegation welcomes the increased active participation of the Consultative Parties, particularly in the Committee for Environmental Protection established by the Madrid Protocol. We hope that the Consultative Parties will continue to ensure that the Committee's work is further intensified in order to preserve the intrinsic value of the continent and continue to foster the spirit and the principles of Antarctic cooperation, with a focus on the protection of the Antarctic environment and on the environmental principles of the Protocol. We also call on the Consultative Parties to continue to implement their commitments under the Antarctic Treaty and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

My delegation remains concerned that the Consultative Parties have yet to fully address the question of liability for environmental damage in Antarctica. While we are pleased with the successful breakthrough in the negotiations and the adoption of annex VI to the Madrid Protocol, on liability arising from environmental emergencies, at the recent Twenty-eighth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, held in Stockholm last June, we believe that the provisions contained therein should be further strengthened and that their scope should be broadened in order to ensure that the question of liability is addressed in a comprehensive manner. Until those gaps are filled, the Madrid Protocol will be perceived as incomplete. The establishment of a strict, legally binding regime would encourage compliance and ensure accountability by ensuring a mechanism for assigning responsibility for any environmental damage that may occur. We urge the Consultative Parties speedily to take necessary measures to achieve the early entry into force of annex VI to the Protocol. Achieving that objective would be a further genuine manifestation of the Consultative Parties' commitment to protecting and preserving the Antarctic environment.

Related to that is the issue of Antarctic tourism, which has grown tremendously during the period under review, as described in paragraphs 106 to 111 of the Secretary-General's report. While we acknowledge the role of the tourism industry in promoting Antarctica as the world's natural reserve, we are particularly concerned at the impact of land-based tourism activities, which are on the rise. Those activities directly threaten the fragile environment of the continent, more than other types of tourism activities. The situation has been further exacerbated with the construction of permanent and semi-permanent infrastructure to support land-based tourism activities. That situation has undoubtedly increased the impact on the Antarctic environment and its associated ecosystems. Taking that development into account, and recognizing the role of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators in monitoring tourism activities in the continent, we believe that the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Tourism Organization should be involved in establishing a framework to ensure the tourism activities in Antarctica are regulated and monitored in an effective manner.

An expedition led by former Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Mahathir Mohamed in February 2002 is among the manifestations of my country's increased interest and involvement with respect to Antarctica, in particular in the area of scientific research, during the past half decade. Through the Malaysian Antarctic Research Programme established in 1999 by the Academy of Sciences Malaysia, Malaysian scientists and postgraduate students have undertaken various scientific research activities to, inter alia, study the linkages, similarities and differences of the atmospheric processes and the biological processes of the Antarctic and tropical environments. Since 1999, more than 40 Malaysian scientists and postgraduate students have been involved in research activities in Antarctica, the world's coldest, windiest and driest continent. Even though Malaysia is not a Consultative or Contracting Party to the Antarctic Treaty, 15 scientific research projects are currently being carried out by Malaysian scientists in the region. It is our hope that the result of their important work will contribute, in one way or another, to common efforts towards greater scientific understanding of the region and to unravelling its mysteries.

In that connection, my delegation would like to express its appreciation to countries that are Consultative Parties, particularly Argentina, Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom, for the valuable assistance and cooperation that they have extended to our scientists, as called for by the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Similarly, we are pleased with the offer of assistance and cooperation from other Consultative Parties, which we will consider accepting in the future. We believe that such meaningful cooperation should promote both excellence in science and scientific research and, equally important, international understanding, which brings about lasting peace, goodwill and prosperity. We believe also that the message of global peace can, indeed, be promoted through science.

My delegation wishes to place on record its appreciation to the Consultative Parties for inviting Malaysia to observe the proceedings of their annual meetings since 2002. That further demonstrates the increased openness of the Consultative Parties. We welcome that openness, which augurs well for future cooperation between the Consultative Parties and countries not Consultative Parties. We are satisfied that the mechanism of dialogue and cooperation that Consultative Parties and countries not Consultative Parties have forged in the context of the United Nations is working well and has yielded tangible results. We certainly look forward to closer and more constructive cooperation in the coming years, in the interest of ensuring that Antarctica will remain a natural reserve devoted to peace and science, for the benefit of all humanity.

In that connection, my delegation welcomes the establishment and the operationalization of the Antarctic Treaty secretariat in Buenos Aires in September last year. The establishment of the secretariat is timely in view of the increase in scientific and non-scientific activities relating to the continent. Indeed, Antarctica is no longer an unknown territory. It is now widely known as a frontier rich in biological treasures and as a vast laboratory for new scientific discoveries, among other things. As highlighted by the Secretary-General in paragraphs 112 and 113 of his report, biological prospecting is an emerging issue, and we believe that the regulation of that sector should be strengthened. We are convinced that the Antarctic Treaty secretariat is in a position to monitor and regulate all relevant activities in that regard and the assistance and cooperation from the United Nat and its relevant agencies could greatly and effecti contribute to efforts in that regard. We hope that secretariat will also address the issue of abandoned unoccupied stations, which pollute the pris landscape of the Antarctic. In addition, we believe interested States could also benefit from the work the activities carried out by the secretariat. We hopeful that cooperation between the Consulta Parties and the international community will be fur enhanced and intensified through the Antarctic Tr secretariat.

Allow me to express my delegation's appreciat to you, Mr. Chairman, for submitting to the Commi draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.60, entitled "Question Antarctica" just over a week ago. We have taken n that you have made the necessary modifications for technical updating of the text. In that connectio wish to inform the Committee of the amendments my delegation, following consultations with delegation of Sweden as representative of Consultative Parties, is proposing to operat paragraphs 4 and 5 of the draft resolution.

With respect to paragraph 4 of A/C.1/60/L.60, delegation proposes the following two amendme The words "those meetings, activities and" should inserted between the words "interested States w information on" and the word "developments"; and paragraph's final phrase, "and requests the Secreta General to submit a report which shall consist of t information to the General Assembly at its sixty-th session", should be deleted.

With respect to paragraph 5, my delegat proposes replacing the phrase "include in provisional agenda of its sixty-third session the it entitled "Question of Antarctica" with the phr "remain seized of the matter".

In essence, the proposed amendments paragraphs 4 and 5 are a manifestation of delegation's desire to subscribe to the letter and spirit of the decision of the General Assem contained in paragraph 3 (a) of the annex to resolution 58/316. Representatives will recall that decision contained in that subparagraph reads, "Ea Main Committee shall give specific attention to rationalization of their future agendas by

biennialization, triennialization, clustering and elimination of items".

In addition, my delegation believes that the deletion of the words of paragraph 4 can be considered to be a contribution towards reducing the heavy volume of documentation submitted to the General Assembly, which has been frequently referred to in past sessions of the General Assembly, most recently in paragraph 6 of the annex to resolution 58/316.

My delegation hopes that the amendments to draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.60 that I have just proposed will meet with your approval, Mr. Chairman, and with that of member States. We hope for, and certainly look forward to, the prompt adoption of the draft resolution, as orally amended, by consensus.

Finally, my delegation believes that the General Assembly debate on the question of Antarctica provides a forum in which those within and outside the Antarctic Treaty system can engage in meaningful dialogue and exchange information about the continent. That process should be further strengthened to ensure that the best interests of mankind are served. We shall continue to seek to ensure that Antarctica will forever be the common heritage of mankind and belong to the international community.

Mr. Lidén (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the State parties to the Antarctic Treaty.

The Antarctic Treaty has been in force for more than 40 years. Of the 45 participating States, 28 have Consultative Party status, primarily by virtue of their qualified scientific research activity in Antarctica. The Consultative Parties have adopted a number of measures to provide for the effective management of Antarctica and to guarantee that the continent remains dedicated to peace, science and international cooperation.

I am pleased to report to the Committee on some of the significant developments that have taken place in this field over the last three years. Delegations will find a more detailed account of them in the text of the full version of this statement, which is now being circulated.

Since the General Assembly last addressed the question of Antarctica, in 2002, the Antarctic Treaty has been further strengthened. For instance, Ukraine was accorded Consultative Party status in 2004. And Malaysia, as we have just heard, has been invited to observe Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings.

The success and ongoing development of the Antarctic Treaty can largely be attributed to the work performed through the annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings. Over the past three-year period, meetings have taken place in Madrid, Cape Town and Stockholm. At all those meetings, important steps were taken to strengthen the regulatory framework for Antarctica, with a view to protecting the Antarctic environment and its dependent and associated ecosystems.

At the Madrid Meeting the establishment of a secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty in Buenos Aires was agreed, and consensus was reached on the basis for calculating and apportioning its costs. The meeting also adopted a headquarters agreement and staff and financial regulations for the secretariat.

At the 2004 Meeting in Cape Town, Mr. Jan Huber of the Netherlands was appointed Executive Secretary, and the Secretariat became operational in Buenos Aires in September of that year. The secretariat has established a website where interested parties can access comprehensive information about Antarctica, including documents from recent Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings.

After 13 years of negotiations, at this year's Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in Stockholm a breakthrough was successfully made on the complex question of liability for environmental damage. The Meeting adopted the important annex VI to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, entitled "Liability Arising from Environmental Emergencies". The aim of the new Stockholm annex is to prevent environmental emergencies in Antarctica. Nevertheless, should an environmental emergency take place, the operator that causes the damage must take measures to minimize and contain the impact. There will be financial obligations for failing to do so.

The negotiations were complicated because they involved rules of international law as well as national law such as tort law, procedural law and insurance law. The Stockholm annex is based, in part, on each operator being held liable for any failure to take prompt and effective response action and, in part, on the cooperation of all States concerned following an environmental emergency. The new, legally binding instrument will come into force when it is approved by

all States that were Consultative Parties when the annex was adopted. An annual evaluation will be made in order to encourage the Parties to approve the annex.

In recent years, there has been a rapid increase in and diversification of Antarctic tourism. In 2004, for example, 30,000 ship-borne tourists visited the continent. That has given rise to growing concern about the environment, as has the trend towards the use of larger passenger vessels, many of which are not of suitable construction for the ice conditions of the Antarctic. Since the 2003 Madrid Meeting, tourism has been high on the agenda because of its potential negative effects on the Antarctic environment.

Tourism and its consequences are closely monitored by the Treaty parties. An Antarctic Treaty Meeting of Experts on Tourism was convened in Tromsø, Norway, in 2004 to examine issues such as adventure tourism; environmental monitoring; safety and self-sufficiency, including search and rescue and insurance; jurisdiction; industry self-regulation; and an analysis of the existing legal framework, including the identification of gaps. A key outcome of the meeting was the parties' agreement that within the Antarctic Treaty system, the question of the regulatory framework for tourism and non-governmental activities in Antarctica required further consideration. While the Treaty parties agreed there was merit in a strong industry association to ensure high standards among its members, it was stressed that establishing the regulatory framework for Antarctic tourism was primarily the responsibility of the Treaty parties.

In a significant development, the Cape Town Meeting adopted measure 4, requiring insurance and contingency planning for tourism and other non-governmental activities in the Antarctic Treaty area. At the most recent Meeting, the Parties also adopted site guidelines for a number of tourist-visited sites. These are intended to provide specific management prescriptions for such sites. A special intersessional contact group on site-specific guidelines is further reviewing the issue.

Environmental protection has always been a central theme of cooperation among the Antarctic Treaty parties. The Antarctic continent is our largest nature reserve. Antarctica can give us a unique perspective and knowledge regarding today's global environmental trends and hazards.

The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty entered into force in January 1998. As of June 2005, the Committee for Environmental Protection had 32 members, and, during the period under review, Romania, Canada and the Czech Republic ratified the Protocol.

After eight years of work, the Committee has become the primary advisory body on environmental matters within the Antarctic Treaty System. The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting has, for instance, responded to the advice of the Committee and has asked the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to examine ways in which the use of heavy fuel oil by vessels in Antarctic waters could be restricted.

As officially designated observers to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) and the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP), are important players within the Antarctic Treaty system. SCAR coordinates scientific research carried out by national Antarctic programmes, and COMNAP advises the treaty system on scientific research and environmental protection.

The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources is a key element of the Antarctic Treaty system. The Convention covers a wide range of issues in terms of fisheries and ocean management. Among the most significant issues have been attempts to curb illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, particularly of the highly lucrative toothfish, through a range of measures, including enhanced port inspections and the blacklisting of vessels. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Convention has established and further developed a satellite-based centralized vessel-monitoring system and a catch-documentation scheme to track the international trade in toothfish. Despite that, such illicit fishing in Antarctic and sub-Antarctic waters continues. The Antarctic Treaty parties have joined with the Convention in condemning such illegal practices, most of which are being undertaken by vessels flying so-called flags of non-compliance. The Antarctic Treaty parties, in support of the Convention, call here on such flag States to ensure that their vessels act responsibly within waters governed by the Convention in accordance with the regulatory measures established for the area.

Biological prospecting — that is, the search for biological assets and the extraction of their genetic properties — in Antarctica has been discussed at Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings. In resolution 7 (2005), adopted at the 2005 Meeting, it is recommended that parties encourage their Governments to continue to keep under review the question of biological prospecting in the Antarctic Treaty area, and to exchange, on an annual basis, information and views relating to that question.

One of the most important factors that initiated the negotiations on what was to become the Antarctic Treaty in 1959 was the success of the International Geophysical Year 1957-58. We are now on the eve of a commemorative initiative that will both acknowledge the 50 years since the International Geophysical Year and result in further huge investments in scientific cooperation in the polar regions. The International Polar Year will take place in 2007-2008. The International Polar Year was initiated by the World Meteorological Organization and has been supported on all sides. The Year will be bipolar in nature, examining the contrasting features of the Arctic and Antarctic and their important interrelationship with the global environment. We consider the International Polar Year to be both timely and relevant, and believe that its findings should be reported back to this Organization.

The Antarctic Treaty system is a constantly evolving process. The Treaty and its environmental Protocol are open to accession by all Members of the United Nations. The parties share a dedicated and strong commitment to ensure that the sensitive Antarctic environment remains protected and that the use of Antarctica is limited to peaceful purposes, with particular focus on scientific cooperation. The Stockholm annex on liability is a step forward in achieving those objectives.

The Chairman: The Committee will take action on draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.60, entitled "Question of Antarctica", as orally amended.

I propose that the Committee adopt draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.60, as orally amended, by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.60, as orally amended, was adopted.

The Chairman: I give the floor to the representative of Malaysia, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the draft resolution just adopted.

Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia): I thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for having introduced draft resolution A/C.1/60/L.60. My delegation is pleased that the Committee was once again in a position to adopt a draft resolution on this subject, as orally amended by my delegation, by consensus. My delegation also wishes to express its appreciation to the delegation of Sweden, representing the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties), for the cooperation extended to us in the consultation process, as well as to the countries that are Consultative Parties. We are also pleased with the support by member States for the draft resolution.

I should like to recall on this occasion that the question of Antarctica was first mentioned in the General Assembly in 1982 during the thirty-seventh session by the then-Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad. I would like to quote some of the salient points from his address during the general debate at that session.

> "It is now time that the United Nations focused its attention on ... Antarctica. A number of countries ... have gone on to claim huge wedges of Antarctica for their countries. ... But the fact remains that those uninhabited lands do not legally belong to the discoverers, just as the colonial territories do not belong to the colonial Powers. Like the seas and the seabed, those uninhabited lands belong to the international community. The countries now claiming them must give them up so that either the United Nations can administer those lands or the present occupants can act as trustees for the nations of the world. At present the exploitation of the resources of Antarctica is too costly and the technology is not yet available, but no doubt the day will come when Antarctica can provide the world with food and other resources for its development. It is only right that such exploitation should benefit the poor nations as much as the rich.
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> "... We are aware [that] the Antarctic Treaty, concluded by a few nations ... provides for their cooperation for scientific research and prohibits non-peaceful activities. While there is some merit

> in this Treaty, it is nevertheless an agreement between a select group of countries and does not reflect the true feelings of the Members of the United Nations or their just claims. A new ... agreement is required so that historical episodes are not made into facts to substantiate claims." (*A/37/PV.10, paras. 36 and 37*)

The words of the then-Prime Minister of my country were uttered 23 years ago against a backdrop very different from today's. Nevertheless, much of what he said at that time remains relevant today, although, admittedly, significant strides have been achieved in other important areas in relation to Antarctica. The circumstances currently prevailing concerning the question of Antarctica demand a modified approach from the international community, bearing in mind the interlinkages between development, including social development, and peace and security, in our common endeavour to chart the course for our future.

My delegation is greatly satisfied that the international community is now more aware and more concerned about the particular significance of the continent of Antarctica. We remain hopeful that Antarctica will remain preserved as the common heritage of mankind. We will seek to ensure that the United Nations remains seized of the question of Antarctica, and we stand ready to discuss this subject in future sessions of the General Assembly, if necessary.

The Chairman: The First Committee has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 88.

Agenda item 116

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

The Chairman: In connection with this item, I would like to refer delegations to document A/C.1/60/1, specifically to the explanation in paragraph 23, which reads as follows: "The General Assembly decided to allocate item 116 also to all the Main Committees for the sole purpose of considering and taking action on their respective tentative programmes of work".

A draft proposed programme of work for the next session has been circulated to all delegations for their consideration. Representatives may have noted one change as compared with this year's programme of work and timetable. Following my consultations with the Chairman of the Fourth Committee, it has been agreed that both the First Committee and the Fourth Committee will begin their work in the first week, in a sequential manner as they have always done in the past. However, the Fourth Committee has agreed to allow our Committee to hold meetings in both the morning and the afternoon on Monday and Tuesday of the second week. That slight change is reflected in the draft programme of work which representatives have before them. The draft programme will, of course, be finalized and issued in its final form before the Committee starts its substantive work at its next session.

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is aware of the consultations that you, Sir, have already carried out, in particular with the Chairman of the Fourth Committee. Nevertheless, we would like to suggest that an additional effort be made to limit the general debate to the first week. This year, that goal was achieved. Indeed, in several meetings there was time to spare. I think, therefore, that next year we should be able to confine the general debate to the first week if we are stricter in our use of the rolling list of speakers. In other words, there may be no need to adjust our programme in terms of available meetings. It would be worth precluding the need to continue the general debate on Monday, 10 October 2006.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like briefly to respond to the comments of Ambassador De Alba of Mexico. My delegation would have no objection to our restricting the general debate to one week, as we did at this year's First Committee session. This year, however, seven meetings were set aside for the general debate. We do not believe that it is desirable to continue to restrict the number of meetings available for the general debate, although we could make better use of the rolling list. Ultimately, I believe, the number of statements made will determine the length of the general debate. Our delegation would therefore prefer the number of meetings allocated to date to be maintained for the general debate.

Mr. Meyer (Canada): Like my colleague Ambassador De Alba of Mexico and the representative of Cuba, I believe that we managed admirably this year to confine the general debate to the initial week of our session. And I think that we should try to ensure that we can manage to do the same next year. I think,

however, that this is a question of flexibility on the part of the Chairman and the Committee: if we find that we need a sixth or seventh meeting, that should be accommodated. However, if the general debate ends earlier than anticipated, we should move on to our thematic segment or to some of the other areas that are on the draft programme and take advantage of that time, rather than have it go idle. In that way, it would be possible to reconcile those two objectives.

Mrs. Fernando (Sri Lanka): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and say how much we appreciate the efficient manner in which you have conducted our work during this year's session. You have done so in a flexible and gracious manner, and your time management has been very effective. You did not cut off any speaker in the general debate, even when statements exceeded the given time limit. So I think that your flexibility and the manner in which you conducted our meetings has helped us.

My comments pertain to the arrangement that led to the thematic discussion on item subjects and the introduction and consideration of draft resolutions being taken up quite early. We, together with many other delegations, tried to accommodate you, Sir, when you asked us to introduce draft resolutions as we went along. But in some cases draft resolutions were introduced before the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions and before the draft resolutions were printed and issued to the Committee. It seems to me that that was a little mechanical, and I would suggest that next year, if possible, we take up the introduction of draft resolutions after the deadline for submission and, ideally, after they have actually been issued and the Committee has the texts before them.

Mr. Labbé (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation has always cast a sceptical glance at the liturgical rigidity and repetitiousness that the general debate has developed over time. We would prefer that it be as brief as possible. If the shortest possible time is a week, so be it. We would prefer it to take even less time. But in this area, clearly, good intentions have to be reconciled with reality.

Some ideas come to mind. For instance, we could replace long, tedious statements with the electronic circulation of the basic points contained in those statements. That way, we could move on as quickly as possible to an interactive thematic discussion. A model of such discussion was provided by the excellent roundtables of this year's High-level Plenary Meeting of heads of State or Government, which were very successful and widely accepted. Given the current options, we would prefer to shorten the general debate so that it can be concluded in the first week and to make the administrative modifications necessary to carry out that idea.

Beyond that, we continue to favour the enhancement of the interactive nature of the debates to the extent possible.

Ms. Martinic (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation expresses its support, Mr. Chairman, for your proposed draft programme of work. In that context, we express our thanks for the Committee's use of time during the present session. In that respect, we understand that flexibility is essential, both on the part of the incoming Chairman — who, we hope, will follow your example — and on the part of members, who made their contributions and were ready to make their statements within this system of a rolling list and to take full advantage of conference services. Therefore, my delegation suggests that we conduct ourselves with the same flexibility — or humanity, as some delegations have said — provided that we share the goal of making the most effective use of our time and resources.

Secondly, my delegation agrees with the comments about the thematic debate. We believe that this year's session has been very useful in that respect. At the same time, we recognize that delegations need greater practice in this type of interactive discussion in order to take best advantage of it. In that context, we call on delegations to strive to make that segment more productive through interaction.

Finally, with respect to the comment about the deadline for submitting draft resolutions and about their introduction, we consider that the incoming Chairman should conduct himself with the same flexibility that you, Sir, have demonstrated during the present session.

Mr. Laki (Uganda): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on the wonderful way that you have conducted these meetings, your time-keeping and all that you have done so far to make the session successful.

I would like to align my delegation with the comments made by the representative of Chile,

especially with respect to the electronic transmission of statements. It would be better if long statements could be transmitted electronically and we then had interactive discussions. We believe that this would help us achieve better results, much more quickly. It would help us save time, which is always short. That is especially true in the case of small delegations, which have to hop from committee to committee.

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): It was not my intention to open a debate on this point, but I believe that it is necessary to underline a number of points.

First, the delegation of Mexico has no intention of reducing the general debate. We understand that the appeal that you, Mr. Chairman, are making is for all delegations to make a rational use of time. There is a recommendation of a 10-minute time limit, but there is no limit for the number of speakers. In that respect, we fully understand the point made by the representative of Cuba.

The intention of my statement was the reduction of time in terms of calendar days, not in terms of the number of minutes of the meetings. We believe that it is possible to carry out the general debate in one week. This year, we had seven meetings assigned for the general debate, and we used only six. And even those were not fully used. We had down time, when the Committee had to suspend its work, even though it had interpretation and the other services available. I believe that thinking of seven or eight meetings is not going to greatly change the current situation.

What would change it is the fact that two meetings are foreseen for the second week. Regrettably, the practice in the Committee is for delegations to request and sign up for a specific day of the debate. If the programme is approved as it is, the Secretariat will have to deal with a great number of requests to speak during the second week. I would like to avoid that situation. I think that conference services can manage the holding of six or seven meetings during the first segment. That was how it was handled last year. It does not necessarily require the agreement of the Chairman of the Fourth Committee.

I propose the solution of amending the programme of work to state that the general debate will take place from 2 October to 6 October, not 9 October, and adding a footnote noting that there is the possibility of holding one or two extra meetings to complete the general debate during that same week. That way, it would be clear that additional meetings, if required, would be convened during the first week. Of course, if conference services could not accept that proposal, the incoming Chairman would raise the problem with the Committee and possibly extend the general debate to the second week.

While I have the floor, I would also like to raise two points for reflection, not for taking a decision. I think that the statement by the representative of Sri Lanka on the thematic debate was very relevant. I think we should undertake a discussion on how best to take advantage of the thematic segment. I believe that this year, Mr. Chairman, under your very wise leadership, the usefulness and the freshness of that segment was clearly demonstrated. But there is much room for improvement. In particular, I think it is very important to know, further in advance who can be invited to participate in those segments as special guests so that the Secretariat and delegations can make adjustments with sufficient time.

I think it is also important to begin to consider the suitability of breaking with the rigid separation between the thematic debate and the taking of decisions. I believe that, in many cases, we could be in a position to adopt decisions at the end of a thematic debate. That does not imply that that will always be the case, but we would be opening up the possibility to adopt draft resolutions that are ready at the end of a given segment, rather than leaving action on every draft resolution for the end of the session. I thank that procedure works in other committees, and I do not see why it should not work in the First Committee.

Again, those are ideas I am putting forth, not concrete proposals that we must be reflected in the draft. However, we could perhaps begin to work on them next year.

Mr. Gala López (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to expound on the proposal pertaining to the general debate.

First, I would like to reiterate that my delegation believes that the general debate is crucially important to the Committee. We do not in fact agree with comments of other delegations that characterize that debate — or some statements — as tedious or insignificant. We respect equally every statement made by every member during the debate.

Secondly, it seems to us that we should also consider the needs of smaller delegations. In many cases, smaller delegations can in practice speak only in the general debate. As we are aware, the thematic debate takes place simultaneously with the crucial phase of negotiating draft resolutions. Clearly, some delegations attach greater importance to participating in informal or bilateral consultations. As a result, the general debate is the point at which member States, and smaller delegations in particular, can make known their positions on the topics under discussion.

Thirdly, we would have no objection if there were an interest in keeping the general debate to one week's duration, if we retain this year's arrangement, namely, scheduling seven meetings in the first week, with the prior agreement of the Chairman of the Fourth Committee. We think that is possible. I also think that takes account of what was stated by the representative of Canada, namely, that if the seven meetings were not fully utilized, we could of course move to another phase of our work. In principle, however, we think we should retain the seven meetings allocated for the general debate. As the Committee will recall, although it has been scaled down to seven meetings, in the past that debate has lasted up to 10 meetings. We therefore believe it would be precipitous to continue to reduce the number of meetings allocated for the general debate.

Ms. Aghajanian (Armenia): I wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your very humane conduct of our work during the general debate, giving countries opportunities to express views they believed important for the membership to hear.

My delegation would like to express its support for the proposed programme of work and timetable presented by the Chairman for our consideration. We agree with the delegations that have said that reducing the length of the general debate from seven to even fewer meetings would not be advisable at this time. Given that this is the second year we have had such a reduction, many delegations are still adjusting. Moreover, if my recollection of our meetings is correct, many countries spoke in the last days of the general debate. Therefore, the Chairman's allocation of two meetings for Monday, 9 October, is much more advisable, given the fact that there are likely to be a great number of speakers on the list for that day. If we were to finish earlier or if there were not enough speakers on that day, we would have no problem in moving to the next item on our programme of work, without interruption or loss of time allocated to the Committee.

In addition, as a small delegation, we think it would be virtually impossible to take action on draft resolutions immediately after the thematic debate. From our experience in the First Committee, most consultations and informal meetings take place during the second and third weeks of our session. It would simply be impossible for small delegations to attend the thematic debate and informal meetings if action were to be taken immediately following the thematic debate. Our understanding is that the way we are conducting our meetings, with action being taken during the last week of our session, gives us sufficient time to participate in the informal meetings and then to join the general membership to take action.

Mr. Shamaa (Egypt): Let me start by thanking you, Mr. Chairman, for the proposed programme of work and timetable, which we believe will be an excellent contribution to our work next year. We support your proposal in that regard.

Allow me to make a couple of points with regard to some of the issues that have been raised. First of all, the delegation of Egypt attaches great importance to the general debate not only of the First Committee but also of all committees and the General Assembly. Frankly, we find it hard to grasp that the same delegations that call for a shorter general debate in the First Committee, which deals with disarmament and non-proliferation matters, have called for an expanded general debate in other committees, such as when it comes to human rights and humanitarian issues. Frankly, that is a position that we fail to understand. One either values the general debate or not.

We therefore support the Chairman's proposals, as well as keeping the general debate as is, namely, to take place in seven meetings. We do not feel that it is appropriate at this stage here today to micromanage next year's general debate. The programme of work is provisional until we agree to it next year. As to whether there will be time remaining from the meetings allocated to the general debate and how we will use it, I think that is something we can agree on next year without micromanaging the matter today.

We of course share the views expressed here with regard to rationalization and better use of time. But due to the supreme value and importance we attach to the

general debate, and given that it is a very important opportunity for member States to put forward their policies regarding disarmament and non-proliferation in a comprehensive manner, we feel it is important to maintain the integrity of the general debate.

If some delegations do not feel the need for that, they can always opt to reduce the length of their statements during the general debate or opt for any other alternative they find suitable. But we definitely feel it is very important to maintain the integrity and value of the general debate. In our opinion, the general debate goes beyond just rhetoric.

Ms. Majali (Jordan): First of all, like other speakers, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your effective time management and on your management of our work during this session.

My delegation would just like to say that if the system has worked, then we do not really think that we need to change it. With regard to the general debate and the time allocated for thematic discussions and for voting, my delegation would like to associate itself with other delegations that spoke on the need to maintain the current status. We especially associate ourselves with the statements made by the representatives of Armenia, Cuba and Egypt. Smaller delegations cannot really adapt to changes like those suggested by other delegations today. Once again, that is why we believe that, as we have been able to finish on time and the system has actually worked the way we wanted, there is no need to make any changes. We therefore support the programme the Chairman has put before us.

The Chairman: Let us review the situation. To my mind, we have three items to discuss.

I think we can all agree with the early invitation to experts for next year. I will do my best to identify the experts and to relay their names to my successor, in order that early invitations can be issued to them. I will work on my own and with my successor next year to satisfy that need.

With regard to the second issue, the proposal that we could take decisions during the thematic debate next year is very valuable. But one problem did arise when I considered the proposals of delegations, namely, that we cannot take decisions in Conference Room 4. We need the voting machine to take decisions. If we can separate the draft resolutions to be adopted by consensus from the ones to be voted upon, then we can take action during the thematic debate. But that will be too complicated, and will not always work. I will convey that valuable proposal to my successor, along with the logistical concern, but will advise the Committee, however, to maintain the current format for at least the next year.

With regard to the thorny issue of the allocation of time, the Chairman of the Fourth Committee approached us to say that that Committee will have too many petitioners next year. That Committee normally starts its work on Wednesday, and has only three meetings during the first week. Petitioners usually stay in New York over the weekend to finish their work. Due to that practical need, the Chairman of the Fourth Committee inquired whether we would consider giving up two meetings, on Monday and Tuesday, with the Fourth Committee paying us back during the second week. We share resources and facilities with the Fourth Committee, so this is a rather delicate context. I therefore see no possibility other than holding two more meetings on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday so that we can have seven meetings for the general debate during the first week.

In a nutshell, we have a choice here: whether or not to accept the Fourth Committee's needs and hold two meetings devoted to the general debate on second Monday, with the understanding, of course, that if we exhaust the number of speakers in the general debate we can use one or two meetings for the thematic debate; in that case, we would keep the seven meetings, with five meetings during the first week and two meetings on the following Monday. If there are objections, I shall have to tell the Chairman of the Fourth Committee that we have difficulties in acceding to his request.

Simply put, the question is whether there is an absolute need to hold all seven meetings during the first week of our work. I shall have to respect the position of the First Committee; and, if necessary, tell the Chairman of the Fourth Committee that we have difficulties in accommodating that Committee's wish. But if we can hold five meetings the first week and two meetings on the second Monday, then we can accommodate the wishes of the Fourth Committee.

Ultimately, this boils down to a single fact: whether any delegation plans to return to its capital after the first week. In that case, we would be in the

same situation as the Fourth Committee, and we will not be able to make a concession. I would therefore like to open up the floor to discuss that point, namely, whether we can cede two meetings to the Fourth Committee or whether we should hold seven meetings during the first week.

Mr. De Alba (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I do not want to delay our work any further. I would simply like to express my support for the adoption of the programme of work as put forth by the Chairman. We can review it next year to determine, with the necessary notice, whether we can revert to a single week of meetings.

What I would like to do is to make a very formal appeal to the Secretariat that it not accept requests to speak on a given day of the general debate. Let us have a truly rolling list, without unutilized time. I have nothing against the general debate or against each and every delegation inscribing its name on the list. But, having decided on a rolling list last year, I think it very important to strictly apply that decision.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I shall try to be brief. On the point regarding the rolling list of speakers, we understand what the representative of Mexico has said. However, for certain delegations with senior officials coming from capitals to make general statements, scheduling their speeches, and coordinating their schedules in general, is problematic if we cannot firm up precisely when they are going to speak. I would therefore caution the Chairman on conveying to the Secretariat the idea of refusing to accept precise dates for speaking.

While I have the floor, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the precision with which you have guided our proceedings. We would encourage future Chairmen to maintain what you have done here over the last several weeks in terms of suggesting time limits, including the use of the lighting system, which we think was a very good idea. We would also like to thank the Secretariat for its service to us all. Of course, as always, we are also grateful for the wonderful service provided by the interpreters.

Mr. Landman (Netherlands): I can agree with almost everything that has been said by the representative of the United States. But I would like to draw some conclusions from what he has said that are along the lines of what the Mexican Ambassador has clearly said.

If indeed there are speakers from capitals coming, and of course there are constraints there, and that can be taken into consideration by the Chairman. But I would request that the Chairman exercise some discrimination in that regard. It would only be in such cases that we could deviate from the rolling list. As we have seen in some instances, it is indeed a waste of time to end our meetings due to the fact that there are no speakers remaining on the list.

A second conclusion I would draw from the statement made by the representative of the United States is that it is actually quite important in principle that we adhere to the idea that we hold the general debate within one week. For planning purposes, that also imposes some discipline on delegations and provides them with leverage when they plead with their respective authorities to come to New York during that specific period. The moment we drop the idea of the general debate taking place during a single week, then I think we will be turning the clock back two years.

Having listened to everyone who has spoken here, I think everyone is generally very happy with the new approach initiated recently. I think it would really be a pity if we were to lose that.

The Chairman: We have one more item to discuss, and we have only half an hour. I see that there are with regard to conceding two meetings to the Fourth Committee during the first week of our work. I shall therefore go back to the Chairman of the Fourth Committee to discuss the matter.

Mr. Freeman (United Kingdom): I think the representative of the Netherlands made my point, so I need not delay the Committee. There is only one point he did not make on my behalf, which I do not want to lose the opportunity to make as time is running out. That is to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for what you have done, and to thank Ambassador De Alba for what he did last year. I am sure that most of my colleagues in the European Union would wish to be associated with those sentiments. We also wish to thank you for your continuing efforts to make our work as efficient as possible. I also agree with the specific points made by the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Shamaa (Egypt): I should very briefly like to say that I am not sure whether my delegation would be comfortable with the use of "discrimination" in the allocation of speaking times for delegations in the general debate.

I would also like some clarification from the Chairman. Did he say that there was or was not agreement on the proposed programme of work?

The Chairman: There is no agreement.

Mr. Shamaa (Egypt): I did not hear a specific rejection of the proposed programme. What I heard was indications that delegations would prefer that, beginning next year, the Committee should look to confining the general debate to one calendar week. But I did not hear a precise rejection of the Chairman's proposal.

The Chairman: If there is no objection, then, I shall take it that the Committee wishes to adopt the draft programme of work and timetable for its next session as it is.

It was so decided.

The Chairman: I would now like to propose that the Committee consider the possible revitalization of the agenda for the sixty-first session. I propose to suspend the meeting in order to conduct discussions informally. There being no objection, I shall now suspend the meeting.

The meeting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.

Other matters

The Chairman: I call on the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

Mr. Abe (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs): It is my intention to convene an informal meeting some time next week to formalize, if possible, the selection of the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the 2006 Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and of the President of the Review Conference itself. The date will be announced in the *Journal*.

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I wish first of all to extend our gratitude to you, Mr. Chairman, for your able and effective leadership of the work of the First Committee. We wish also to commend you for building upon the measures taken by your predecessor, Ambassador Luis de Alba of Mexico, to improve the effectiveness of the methods of work of the Committee. NAM believes that the rationalization of the work of the Committee is a process and that efforts to achieve the objective of rationalization should be continued in a transparent and comprehensive manner. We hope that the measures will be retained and further developed at the forthcoming session of the Committee.

With the impasse reached in various parts of the multilateral disarmament machinery in dealing with the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects, it has become obvious that both the role of the First Committee and the outcome of its work have now attained greater importance. Like 2004, 2005 has proven to be a disappointing year for many delegations. We are dissatisfied at the omission of a section on disarmament and non-proliferation from the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting. We are also disappointed at the fact that the most recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held earlier this year, failed to agree on substantive recommendations.

Against that background, we would like to underscore the importance of the First Committee and other elements of the multilateral disarmament machinery, in particular the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament, in dealing with questions of disarmament and related international security issues. We also underline the need to strengthen the bodies that make up the disarmament machinery as forums for deliberation and negotiation in a balanced, constructive and comprehensive manner and in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter and multilaterally negotiated treaties, agreements and conventions.

As in previous years, NAM demonstrated its constructive and positive outlook, this year by submitting five draft resolutions and two draft decisions for the consideration of the Committee. Those draft resolutions and draft decisions received the overwhelming support of member States, and some were adopted without a vote. In that regard, NAM would like to extend its appreciation and gratitude to all delegations that supported those draft resolutions and draft decisions.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the members of the Bureau and to

the Secretary of the Committee and her staff, as well as to the interpreters, for all their hard work and cooperation during our session.

Finally, NAM remains committed to promoting international peace and security, primarily through disarmament measures. We strongly believe that multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations remain the only sustainable way to address disarmament and international security issues. It is our hope that multilateralism within the framework of the United Nations will provide much-needed impetus for moving forward the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda in our endeavours next year.

Ms. Archer (Bahamas): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, which my delegation has the honour to chair this month. The Group wishes to express its deep appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman, and to all the other members of the Bureau for the exemplary manner in which you have guided our deliberations to a successful and timely conclusion. We wish also to extend our sincere appreciation to the Secretary of the Committee for her hard work during the session, as well as to all the staff of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their support and assistance. Our thanks go also to all other members of the Secretariat, including conference service and interpretation staff, for their invaluable contributions to our work. Finally, we thank all delegations for their valuable cooperation during this session.

Closing statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: We stand at the end of more than four weeks of deliberations of the First Committee for 2005. Let me extend my sincere appreciation to delegations for their active participation in, and valuable contributions to, the work of the Committee. After engaging in delicate and consuming debate and action, I believe that we all need now is good rest to recharge our energies.

As Chairman of the First Committee, I tried to be a punctual and disciplined member of the crew. I also tried to make the work of the Committee more efficient through better allocation of time, the promotion of interactive discussions and further rationalization of the agenda and clusters. Some of those initiatives were successful, and some of them fell short of my expectations. I take responsibility for the failures. For the successes I would first like to thank my predecessor, Ambassador De Alba, for having laid excellent foundations for the work of the Committee at this session.

I would like to thank the members of the Bureau — the three Vice-Chairpersons and the Rapporteur — whose expertise and advice have been invaluable. I also offer my profound gratitude to Ambassador Abe, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, as well as to his staff, for the support and assistance they rendered to the Committee. My special thanks also go to Ms. Cheryl Stoute, Secretary of the Committee, and to all her colleagues, who deserve a lot of credit for the smooth and effective proceedings of the Committee. I would also like to thank all the interpreters, translators, record writers, press officers, document officers, conference officers and sound engineers, who have, as always, worked diligently behind the scenes in order to support the work of the Committee.

It is my sincere wish that the next session of the Committee, under the guidance of the succeeding Chairman, will be blessed with success and progress, both in substance and procedure.

It goes without saying that moderating our Committee is a learning experience for the moderator. In this case, chairing the First Committee at a time when all the other elements of the disarmament machinery are at a standstill gave me a chance to reflect on the substance of disarmament and non-proliferation. I would like to share with the Committee some of the thoughts that went through my mind as I chaired the Committee during this session.

Humankind has been very successful at producing ever-deadlier weapons. Indeed, we have done so well in that enterprise that we now possess a stockpile of arms that could obliterate all humankind several times over. The growing spectre of nuclear proliferation has made it clear that we are at a critical juncture. We are at a crossroads, with one path leading to disarmament and non-proliferation and the other leading to never-ending arms races.

One of the most critical choices for humankind in the twenty-first century will be between those two paths. By reason alone, the choice should be clear and simple. The path of disarmament and non-proliferation is the one we must take. Why, then, is it so difficult for us to make progress on that critical issue?

Ultimately, what we are dealing with is perhaps a question of evolutionary dimensions. Among species, human beings have been endowed with uniquely powerful intellectual capacities. We have had a tendency to give unbounded praise to that characteristic, imagining ourselves to be the paragon among animals, capable of god-like appreciation and understanding. Yet, more and more, we are coming to realize that our distinctive mental capacities cut both ways.

They have surely given us unprecedented power over our environment; but at the same time, to our detriment, they have also given us the potential to drive ourselves to extinction. Environmental degradation and nuclear proliferation are cases in point. If, in all our intelligence, we prove incapable of resolving those problems that we have ourselves created, then we as a species might never fulfil the potential with which evolution has endowed us. We may instead bring about our own extinction, along with that of countless other species with whom we share this planet. Will humankind move beyond that dilemma, or will we prove to be nothing but carnivorous apes with a megalomaniacal perception about our own mental capacity, as the German philosopher Gotthold Lessing put it?

It is critical that we make a collective decision about disarmament and non-proliferation. Unfortunately, however, history shows that humankind does not make such momentous decisions by reason alone. Time and again, it has been catastrophe and tragedy that have motivated people to forgo their parochial interests and make fundamental decisions for the common good. Indeed, it was the disasters of the First and Second World Wars that motivated us to create the United Nations.

But there is the rub: we have used our extraordinary mental capacities to overcome many sources of catastrophe but, at the same time, humankind seems to have lost the sense of tragedy that would enable us to make the historic decisions that our time requires. Without that sense of tragedy, narrow self-interest and parochial national concerns have become the governing dynamics of our time. They take precedence over much-needed enlightened self-interest and leadership by example. The potential catastrophes of the twenty-first century, including environmental degradation and nuclear proliferation, cannot be averted through the pure pursuit of national interests.

The burning question of the twenty-first century, then, is how to escape our own trap. How can we rally the troops to overcome the self-defeating dynamics of our time, which have paralysed the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation? The answer to that question remains elusive. As we continue to search for it, our best hope is to rely on our reason and intelligence to establish enlightened self-interest and leadership by example as the governing dynamics of international relations.

It is time to close now. Once again, I offer my deepest thanks to all members. To those of you who must travel, I wish you a safe journey home.

The sixtieth session of the First Committee of the General Assembly is now concluded.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.